



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 17-1617, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

IN MEMORY OF JEFF MCGRATH

WHEREAS, Jeff McGrath, award-winning journalist, pioneer in the television home shopping industry and longtime ABC7 television executive widely credited with launching the career of Oprah Winfrey died at the age of 73, leaving behind family, countless friends, colleagues and a community enriched for having known him; and

WHEREAS, Jeff McGrath was a talented and influential Chicago television executive for more than thirty years. In addition to his countless career achievements he was well-known and beloved by his colleges as a generous mentor to generations of producers and programmers working around the country. His wisdom and guidance helped shape the next generation of television journalists; and

WHEREAS, Jeff McGrath's distinguished career in television management included a lengthy run as program director at ABC-owned WLS-Channel 7. In addition to his outstanding work there he will long be remembered for being the first to spot a young Oprah Winfrey on the demo tape of Debra DiMaio, a producer from Baltimore he had hired for "A.M. Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Jeff McGrath served as general manager of WYCC-Channel 20, the City Colleges of Chicago public television station, and as president and chairman of the board of Silver King Communications, parent company of the former WEHS-Channel 60 and thirteen other home-shopping stations. He also was president and partner of Center City Studios, a broadcast and advertising production facility in Chicago. He is credited with the launch of Channel 60 and 14 UHF stations and other low-power stations across the country; and

WHEREAS, Jeff McGrath was a Chicago native and graduate of Drake University. He joined ABC 7 as a producer/promotion writer in 1967 and moved up to community affairs director, specials producer, executive producer and assistant program director before he was named program director in 1976. McGrath's first work on a locally produced program was as an assistant producer on "The Chicago Show," hosted by Ronnie Barrett. In addition to others, he was credited with creating "The Prize Movie with Ione," a daily two-hour movie show combined with a call-in promotion; and

WHEREAS, Jeff McGrath was a pioneer in the televised home shopping industry. He was chairman of Silver King Communications, which owned 12 Home Shopping Network stations, including WEHS-Ch. 60, which now is WXFT-TV. McGrath oversaw the launch and automation of the 12 stations as the Home Shopping Network undertook a transition from cable TV to over-the-air stations. Channel 60 is widely credited with playing a major role in establishing home shopping channels. He insured that Channel 60 was a state-of-the-art facility; on his watch the home shopping concept grew exponentially from nothing into a two billion dollar industry in six years; and

WHEREAS, Jeff McGrath's exceptional work was frequently recognized by his peers; he was singled out for distinction when he was awarded a local Emmy by the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for his work as executive producer of an ABC 7 documentary on crime entitled *Burglary: The Easiest Crime* in 1973; and

WHEREAS, Jeff McGrath will long be remembered for his support and promotion of unheard voices and perspectives. He was instrumental in producing programming that served and responded to the needs of underrepresented or marginalized groups; he brought their stories to the foreground. Above all, he will be remembered for doing this while

remaining a model of affability and collegiality; and

WHEREAS, the County of Cook has lost a great friend in Jeff McGrath. He will be sorely missed by his friends, neighbors and colleagues. His loss will be felt most acutely by his wife Joan and son Andrew; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County commemorates the exceptional life of Jeff McGrath and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable and innumerable contributions he has made to the Citizens of Cook County, Illinois; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and that an official copy of the same be tendered to the family of Jeff McGrath.